

Remarks

Based on the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all outstanding objections and rejections. Claims 1-3, 5-10 and 13-34 are pending in the application with claims 1, 14, 23, 26 and 27 being the independent claims.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102(b)

Claims 14, 15, 21, 33 and 34 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by European Patent Application No. 1208891 ("the European application"). Applicants respectfully submit that the European application is not available as prior art with respect to the present application. The present application was filed on January 30, 2001. The European application, while filed on November 16, 2000, did not publish until May 29, 2002, more than one year *after* the Applicants' filing date. Hence, the European application is not available as prior art with respect to the present application. Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

Information Disclosure Statement

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner provide an initialed copy of the PTO/SB/08 included with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on July 17, 2001. Applicants previously requested that the Examiner consider the references cited in the Information Disclosure Statement, but have not yet received confirmation that the Examiner has done so. If the Examiner requires a copy of the previously submitted Information Disclosure Statement, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in the application.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding objections and rejections. Applicants believe that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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